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The Carnival Ought To Be Over

It was appropriate that the trial of Clay Shaw outlasted Mardi Gras in New Orleans this year. It had previously surpassed the records set by that city's glorious midwinter carnival for bombast and fantasy and it might as well have the longevity record, too. Like Mardi Gras, its ending was striking and abrupt, but the memory lingers on. District Attorney Jim Garrison, unable to withdraw from the dreamland in which he and his colleagues have wandered for two years, has now had the effrontery to charge Mr. Shaw with perjury.

Clay Shaw, of course, has been only incidental baggage on that trip through wonderland. District Attorney Jim Garrison tried to put the Warren Commission, not Clay Shaw, on trial in that New Orleans courtroom. And the charge was not a simple conspiracy among three men, two of them dead, to murder a President but a complex conspiracy involving the Nation's most respected men. The only real figure who had a major role in this bit of theater was Mr. Shaw. The others were right out of *Alice* or Damon Runyon—a book salesman who couldn't make up his mind about what he may or may not have heard, a tax accountant who believes he has been hypnotized into bankruptcy, a dope addict unable to separate his personal dreamland from reality, and a prosecutor who has been tagged by an irreverent press as the Jolly Green Giant.

All in all, the case of *Louisiana v. Clay Shaw* must be chalked up as one that started out as a figment of someone's imagination. It became real and took on a life of its own through a series of incredible investigative blunders. It forced those who believed in it to conclude that many distinguished men—Lyndon B. Johnson, Earl Warren, Richard Russell, J. Edgar Hoover and even Robert F. Kennedy—had engaged in the foulest kind of plot.

And it disappeared like a soap bubble when tested in a courtroom where hard facts displaced speculation.

Among all the statements that Mr. Garrison has made in the past two years, one stands out. Speaking to the jury last Saturday, he said, "You represent, in a sense, the hope of humanity against government power. You represent humanity, which yet may triumph if you will cause it to do so in the course of what you do." Humanity did triumph in the course of that jury's deliberations, although not in the way that Mr. Garrison sought. Twelve men demonstrated once again the soundness of the faith this Nation has always placed in trial by jury. They gave Mr. Shaw and the Nation a triumph of reality, reason and common sense and denied to Mr. Garrison a triumph that would have been based on fantasy, imagination and absurdity.

We would like to believe that the jury's quick and unanimous verdict will lay to rest all the tales and theories that surround the death of President Kennedy and the work of the Warren Commission. But to hold such a belief would be to indulge in fantasy as much as did those who prosecuted Mr. Shaw. Anyone who has believed in the existence of a conspiracy involving the Dallas police, the FBI, the CIA, the Secret Service, the Justice Department, the White House and the Warren Commission will have no difficulty expanding it to include the trial judge and the jury. Mr. Garrison, for example, cannot accept the truth when it is revealed to him by a jury of his peers. His attempt yesterday to reopen the matter and to persecute Mr. Shaw even more than he has already done is beyond contempt. The Louisiana courts should promptly dismiss the charges Mr. Garrison has brought and the proper State officials should take whatever steps are necessary to remove him from office.